



**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
Washington, DC 20423

*Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration*

April 2, 2007

Ms. Christa Dean  
Surface Transportation Board  
Section of Environmental Analysis  
395 E Street SW, Room 1108  
Washington DC 20423-0001

**RE: STB Finance Docket No. 34936, Northern Columbia Basin  
Railroad Project – Construction and Operation – In Grant County,  
Washington; Request for Information and Preliminary Comments**

Dear Ms. Dean:

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) are beginning an environmental review for a proposed rail construction project called the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project.<sup>29</sup> The project is located in the Moses Lake area of Grant County, Washington. I have enclosed a map of the proposed project area for your reference.

The purpose of the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project is to attract new rail-dependent businesses to the Moses Lake area, and to encourage the continued use and preservation of rail in the region. The three components of the proposed project include:

- Building a new rail line from Wheeler to Parker Horn;
- Improving existing track between Parker Horn and the Grant County International Airport (GCIA); and
- Extending the existing Columbia Basin Railroad's track to the industrial areas just south and east of the GCIA.

Pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, the Board's environmental rules, the Washington State Environmental Policy Act, WSDOT requirements, and other applicable Federal and state laws, the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) and WSDOT will prepare a document that

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<sup>29</sup> For the proposed project, the Board and WSDOT are co-lead agencies. See 40 CFR 1501.5(b).

evaluates the potential environmental effects of the proposed project, including any reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposed route. The purpose of this letter is to request comments from your agency on the resources under your jurisdiction that could be affected by the proposed project, as well as any information on permits or approvals that may be required by your agency.

This letter begins the process by which SEA and WSDOT will assess the potential environmental effects, both positive and negative, that may be associated with the proposed project. We appreciate your assistance in identifying whether resources of concern to your agency may be affected by the proposed project. We would appreciate receiving your response by **May 2, 2007**, in order to incorporate your comments into the scope of study, as appropriate.

Please send your comments to:

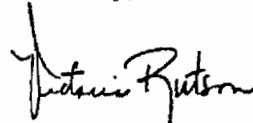
**Ms. Elizabeth Phinney**  
**WSDOT Rail Office**  
**P.O. Box 47407**  
**Olympia, WA 98504-7407**

Please send your emails to:

**PhinneE@wsdot.wa.gov**

The SEA contact is Christa Dean. Ms. Dean may be contacted at (202) 245-0299 or [christa.dean@stb.dot.gov](mailto:christa.dean@stb.dot.gov). If you have any questions about this proposed project, please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Phinney with WSDOT or Christa with SEA. Thank you for your time and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson  
Chief  
Section of Environmental Analysis

Enclosure

cc: Elizabeth Phinney, WSDOT